

# The Sourdough

S E N T I N E L

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## Old Glory flies over Anchorage

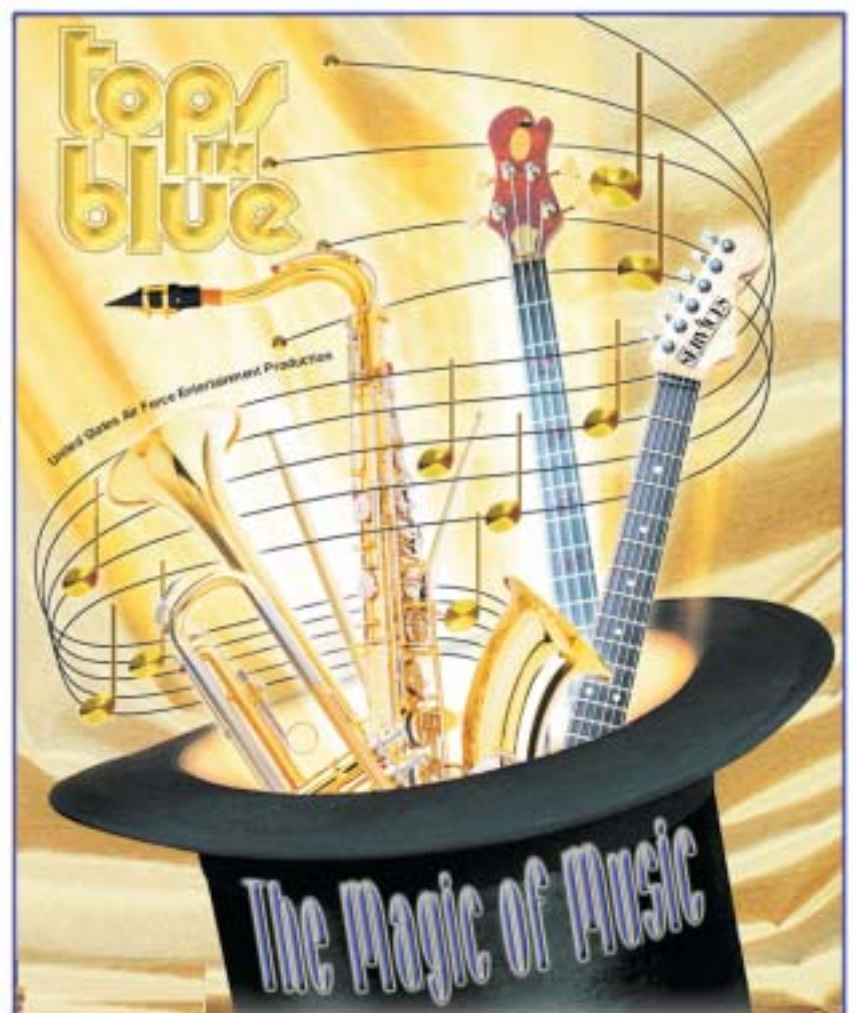
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## Holiday Fairytale



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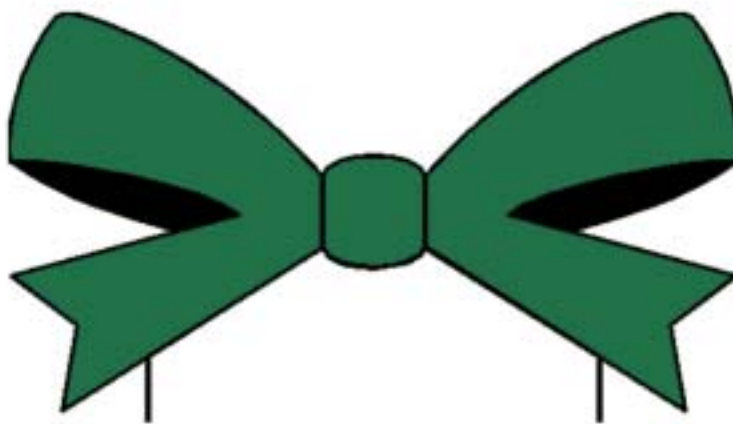


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# Holiday Fairytale



## Elmendorf ballerina makes sugar plum dreams come true in Nutcracker spotlight

By Staff Sgt. Jim Fisher  
3rd Wing Public Affairs

Fairy-tale splendor took center stage at the Atwood Concert Hall last weekend as SouthCentral Alaskans were treated to Ballet West's performance of the holiday standard, the Nutcracker. With the whimsically intricate sets providing the backdrop, more than 12,000 who attended through the six performances were introduced to a new Clara Drosselmeier.

As audiences became enchanted with 12-year-old Madison Alston's portrayal of the tale's central character and dreamscape, they were also witnessing the fruition of a talented, enthusiastic young dancer in the process of making her dreams come true.

Madison, the daughter of Elmendorf's Lt. Col. Douglas and Misty Alston, was the first local dancer chosen to star in the annual production and began to garner the spotlight long before the orchestra began to play Friday afternoon.

"I've never been in this Nutcracker before so I thought it would be fun to try, and I went into the audition thinking I was going to be a soldier because I was the right height," Madison said. The dancer, who began ballet lessons when she was 3, had previously appeared in two productions of the Nutcracker while her family was stationed in San Antonio, Texas, but in minimal roles. The Ballet West official conducting the auditions soon singled Madison out.

"She had me do some steps by myself, and I thought 'maybe I'll get to be a mouse'," Madison said. After being called to later rehearsals, Madison was informed that Ballet West was considering her for the starring role and would like her to audition yet again, this time at the company's home studio in Salt Lake City, Utah.

"That was really exciting. Then we went and everyone there was very nice. So I auditioned in front of the artistic director and a ballet master and ballet mistress and they said 'yes, we want you to be Clara.'"

"I was very happy and kind of nervous, because I'd never been 'Clara' before" Madison said. "But it was also very exciting. It was like, 'Wow, I'm Clara.'"

The excitement wasn't required to carry her through rigorous workouts and rehearsals, as she was used to a regimen that included dancing four days a-week with the Alaska Dance Theatre and had experience in similar productions. Adding three weekly Nutcracker rehearsals to the slate wasn't a problem for Madison, who sees dancing as a labor of love, according to her mother.

"Ballet was something that she loved, and we've just kind of followed and supported," Misty said. "It wasn't something we pushed her in, things have just come naturally to her, so with this opportunity, she was perfectly happy to do the work involved."

In addition to the non-stop rehearsal schedule, the role came with a complexity Madison hadn't previously experienced.

"All the classes I had taken had gotten me ready, then the rehearsals on and on and on to get ready for the actual performances," Madison said. "It wasn't that the steps were that complicated, but it was the acting and knowing when to go and following the music. There will be certain cues when to do stuff and you want to come in early or you'll end up late."

Hitting her marks and mastering the role meant being on cue for virtually the entire performance, even when she was sitting still. "Clara" spends a significant portion of Act II sitting in awe of the dream-like spectacle unfolding before her.

"Sitting there in a tutu really isn't that comfortable," Madison said. "You have to cross your legs and sit up straight – once you sit down you're not supposed to move."

Smiling was the hardest part, Madison explained, including fighting the urge to yawn during the Waltz of the Flowers. But she came through, getting past nerves and

delivering for the throngs of enchanted attendees.

"She's only 12 and not very big so she's not very intimidating, but everyone around her was. She was pretty nervous, but as the performances went on the last few days, you could tell she was getting more relaxed," her father said. With her poise, some yet undiscovered talent shone through.

"Madison is not the type of child to say 'look at me,' she doesn't seek attention, she just loves to dance," her mother said. "So when I first saw her acting ability, it really surprised me – she was very good."

The opportunity to see their daughter perform ended up being an opportunity for all the Alstons, her parents explained. By the time the opening curtain went up, members of the family from Utah and Oklahoma joined her parents and sisters in attendance.

"It was such a wonderful opportunity for her to be able to exhibit the talents she's been blessed with and the hard work and dedication she's put in to make the performance a success," her father said. "To have that opportunity is certainly wonderful for her and for us as a family. She's a good daughter and a good sister and that makes it even more exciting for us."

No one, however was more excited than Madison.

"I'd like to do it all over again because it was so fun," Madison said. "I was so nervous but once I got to do it, you know, I couldn't believe it was over. I'd never danced with a real company before, that was real neat."

Madison now looks forward to rekindling her Ballet West experience by auditioning for the Ballet West Conservatory's summer program this spring. As the young ballerina continues to pursue her dancing aspirations, successive acts of this fairy-tale story are entering production.

*"I was very happy and kind of nervous ... it was like, wow, I'm Clara."*

-- Madison Alston



# Open Ranks

By Staff Sgt. Jim Fisher  
3rd Wing Public Affairs

Since Sept. 11, flags are flying everywhere. I see them on everything from cars in traffic to the Zamboni at Dempsey-Anderson Ice Arena. In the last two months, I've been surprised at my response to the emergence of the red, white and blue in our society.

Long gone were the chills up my spine felt during my first retreat ceremony in basic training. The emotion invoked by partaking in my first repatriation ceremony had gone dormant. What many Americans began to see and describe as renewed pride and recognition of the glory of America through the very lucid symbolism of our flag eluded me. I only thought about the job at hand. How close is our victory? What will it take? What part, however limited, can I play?

Earlier this week the Sentinel staff went hunting for flags throughout the city (the fruit of this labor is this week's photo feature on Pages 8 and 9). While going about, taking pictures and talking to members of the community about their flags, the awesome quality of the flag began to return to me with sharp clarity.

I saw the red, white and blue through the eyes of ordinary citizens, and what it meant to them.

I was moved to recall the memory of my hometown of Sacramento, Calif. in 1991, as Operation Desert Storm had just begun. Driving across a bridge with a friend, I caught sight of a gigantic flag covering the side of a four or five story building. "That's beautiful," he said. It sure was. The symbol meant so much to me because the vibrant arrangement of our colors were singular in what they represented -- the glory of our nation. No other nation has a banner so representative. There are many three color arrangements, but none with 64 signifying elements that blend in glorious, victorious brilliance, like we have continuously blended and succeeded as a people.

I felt this way while watching a flag twisting in the wind on Benson Boulevard Monday. I felt the chill of that first retreat ceremony at Lackland, when a cool wind swept across the parade ground. How fortunate I was to be a part of such a triumphant nation, and Air Force, and how proud...

# Arctic Life

Great living in the great land

## 3 SVS airman among TIB performers

By Master Sgt. Jon K. Scudder  
3rd Wing Public Affairs

Tops In Blue, the entertainment showcase of the Air Force, performs at the base theater Dec. 11 and 12 at 7:30 p.m. Doors will open for the free performance at 6:30 p.m. No tickets are needed.

"The 2001 edition of Tops in Blue, *The Magic of Music*, is a spectacular medley of songs guaranteed to captivate the entire audience," said Elmendorf Project Officer Karl Croft. "For over 45 years, Tops in Blue has been energizing audiences around the world. This year's show is no exception."

Croft added that this year's free, 90-minute show, will guide people through a magical journey of yesterday and today's Broadway, pop, and dance music, spiced with a combination of love songs and a heartfelt finale of "God Bless The U.S.A."

"This year's team of 35 active-duty military members is indeed a reflection of the 'best of the best,'" said Tom Edwards, the show's producer and director of Air Force Entertainment. One of the best is Elmendorf's very own, Airman 1st Class Spencer Masslieno-Allen, from the 3rd Services Squadron, who is a



vocalist for the group.

Maj. Thomas Joyce, 3rd Services Squadron commander, said he is looking forward to Masslieno-Allen's performances at Elmendorf. "If he's as harmonious with Tops in Blue as he was with our customers at the North Star Inn, it will be one great show," said Joyce.

Tops In Blue is an all active-duty Air Force special unit made up of talented amateur performers selected

## Spouses get Holiday support from FSC

By Senior Airman Connie L. Bias  
3rd Wing Public Affairs

The holiday season's uplifting atmosphere can be elusive for a spouse or family member stuck at home. Financial hardships, gloomy winter days and being left at home while a spouse works long hours can cause anxiety for military family members and create a strained holiday mood.

To ensure the joys of winter are available to everyone the Family Support Center offers numerous programs and activities that can help spouses deal with the burdens of being in a military family.

One such program is the Spouses' Night Out. Spouses from the base meet once a month and eat dinner at a local restaurant. The next night is Dec. 7.

"This program gives the military member and their spouse a chance to spend some time together, and it's always planned in conjunction with Give Parents A Break, so parents don't have to worry about childcare," said Patty Friend, a family life specialist.

The Cabin Fever Break is another program designed to provide spouses an opportunity to socialize and get out during winter months. Sponsored by the Armed Services YMCA, the 3rd Services Organization, the

Elmendorf Officers' Spouses' Organization and the FSC, the program runs from October through April, every second and fourth Wednesday of the month from 9:30-11:30 a.m.

"The Cabin Fever Break is a great way for people to gradually get out and meet new people," Friend said. "Spouses enjoy a bit of free time and adult company, but their children are there in the same building, so they never really have to leave their kids."

The next Cabin Fever Break activity is a Christmas craft class Dec. 12 at 8535 Wewak Dr.

The FSC also has activities designed specifically for spouses of deployed and remote-tour members, such as the Hearts Apart Coffee Break.

"The coffee break is held every Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.," Friend said. "Spouses can sit down with other adults and work on crafts, and kids can come and play with toys and watch videos. It almost becomes a family situation, which is perfect for those with absent spouses."

The support doesn't end there for people with deployed spouses, said Staff Sgt. Mark Rochon, family readiness non-commissioned officer. Rochon can get free oil changes and phone cards for spouses, along with many other free services. He also has a digital camera and scanner so people can send photos to family

for their entertainment abilities.

Each year, thousands compete in base talent contests and the most talented move on to higher levels of competition. The result is an elite group composed of 35 of the most talented vocalists, musicians, and dancers anywhere.

Each team begins their tour with an intense 45-day training period at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, "Home of Tops In Blue." This training consists of a highly accelerated educational process to prepare them to succeed as world class entertainers and distinguished Air Force Ambassadors during their nine-month tour which encompasses 125 performances in 20 countries around the world.

The performers must not only master the instrumental, vocal, choreography, and staging requirements of the performance, but also the intricate responsibilities of being their own technical staff.

For those interested in finding more about joining Tops in Blue or more about the 2001 tour, you can check out their official web site at [www-p.afsv.af.mil](http://www-p.afsv.af.mil).

Come out and see Tops in Blue. For more information, call Croft at 552-8529.

members in the field. People can come in for the free digital pictures every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 2-4 p.m.

"This special block of time is set aside just for the holidays; it lasts through Christmas," Rochon said. "Normally, though, anyone can come in anytime and use the camera and scanner; it's not just for people with deployed family members. We want to do whatever we can to help."

The center also coordinates base volunteers, and spouses can use volunteer time to meet new people and gain work experience.

"There are many places to volunteer, and when parents volunteer on base, child care is fully paid by the Air Force Aid Society," said Camella Davis, volunteer coordinator. "The parents can choose any fully licensed daycare provider. They just need to talk to me; I'll set them up."

The FSC also has a financial counselor available, numerous parenting classes, a Weight Watchers program and more. The center works collectively with other base agencies, like the 3rd Services Squadron and the Chapel, to network and get information for spouses, and will formulate personal support plans based on individual needs.

For more information, visit the FSC at 8535 Wewak Dr. or call 552-4943.